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HAWAIIAN ANNEXATION

HON. GEO. S. BOUTWELL'S ADDRESS

BEFORE THE

BOOT AND SHOE CLUB OF BOSTON

DECEMBER 22, 1897



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Mr. President and Gentlemen:

As I was forewarned by the gentleman from whom I received your invitation to meet the members of the Boston Boot and Shoe Club this evening, that the time for the discussion of the topic before us was limited to two hours, and that four persons were to participate in the debate, I have forecast the observations that I have had in mind that I might avoid the danger of trespassing upon the privileges of others who are to address you.

Since the organization of the government there have been four opportunities for the annexation of territory within continental lines, and all of them have been accepted. In the same period of time there have been three tenders of insular possessions, two of them without direct consideration in money, and all of them have been declined.

The first of these was the tender of the Sandwich Islands, made through our then Commissioner, Mr. Elisha H. Allen, in the year 1852. It was in the early months of Mr. Fillmore's administration, when Mr. Webster was Secretary of State.

Mr. Allen had been my acquaintance and friend from the year 1847, when we were associated as members of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, and as members also of an important Special Committee.

Upon his arrival in Boston he took lodgings at the Adams House where I was then living. Our meetings at the table and otherwise were frequent and it was then that I received from Mr. Allen the statement that

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he came with authority, *carte blanche*, from the king to tender the islands to the United States. There may have been terms and conditions, but none were mentioned by Mr. Allen. At the same time he informed me that the offer had been declined by Mr. Webster.

The treaty for the acquisition of the island of St. Thomas, that was negotiated by Mr. Seward in President Johnson's administration, was not ratified by the Senate. The cause of its failure, or the circumstances incident to its failure, have been the subject of controversy. The undertaking failed, and that controversy should not now be revived.

In General Grant's first term the country had an opportunity to acquire so much of the island of San Domingo as is known by that name. The terms of acquisition were favorable. The project was supported resolutely by General Grant, when his influence in the country had not suffered any serious impairment. The offer was rejected by the Senate, and there were no indications of a controlling public opinion adverse to its action.

Thus it appears that there have been three favorable opportunities for the acquisition of insular possessions, all of which have been declined. Two of them were within a day's sail of our mainland coasts, while one of them, and that the one now urged upon the country, is more than two thousand miles from our nearest harbor on the Pacific Ocean.

The question of the extension of slavery was involved in the projects for the annexation of Louisiana, Texas and California, and except for the existence of that question the acquisition of those vast territories would have received a general support in all parts of the country.

The fourth was the acquisition of Alaska, a territory that in 1867 offered but few attractions to the people of the United States. It is worthy of remark that the men

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of the revolutionary era contemplated a union with Canada.

This résumé warrants the statement that the country has accepted continental territory as a wise public policy, now fully justified by experience, and that it has as uniformly rejected insular possessions.

And, further, this résumé warrants the statement that the burden of proof is upon those who demand a change in our public policy.

The public policy of the country may not have been based upon distinct propositions resting in the public mind, but I formulate that policy in two propositions, namely: — First, continental acquisitions of contiguous territory tend to peace; second, the acquisition of insular territories increases the chances of war and adds to the difficulties in the way of conducting war.

If the first proposition is under question in the mind of anyone, much support may be found in our own experience and in the recent experience of other countries. The force of the North was augmented immensely in our Civil War by the consideration that two contiguous nations would not remain at peace, except during brief intervals between long and lengthening periods of open or smothered hostilities.

By unification the Provinces and States of Germany and Italy have been forced into peaceful relations with each other.

And, if now it were possible for France, Italy, Spain and Portugal to unite into one Confederated Republic they would not only command peace for themselves, but they might dictate peace for Europe.

The possession by Great Britain of the Canadas has given rise to many, I may say to most, of the questions that have disturbed our relations with England during the last sixty years. I mention the Oregon dispute, the

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San Juan dispute, the Caroline affair, the Northeastern boundary controversy, the Fenian invasions, the fisheries and now the seal fishery in Behring Sea.

If the United States and the Canadas were under one government the killing of seal upon the open sea would not be defended by anyone.

It is to be admitted that small countries and minor communities are strengthened and protected by union with strong states. That, as a practical question, is their question and not our question. If the gain is theirs and the loss is ours there can be no ground of defence for a policy of annexation, unless it can be found in the indulgence of the feeling called sympathy. Sympathy is akin to one of the passions, and the guidance of the passions in public affairs ought never to be accepted.

My second proposition is not within the limits of actual demonstration, but it can command some support argumentatively.

Assume a war with England, would our position be strengthened or weakened by the possession of St. Thomas, San Domingo or Hayti, or by the possession of one or all of the islands of the Carribean Sea?

Assume a war with England, or Russia, or Japan, or China, a possible, aggressive and warlike power in a future not far away, and would the possession of the eight tropical islands in the mid-Pacific and extending over three degrees of latitude and six meridians of longitude, be a help or a peril? Would a coaling station or a harbor of resort at the mouth of the Pearl River, two thousand miles and more from our Pacific coasts give security, either in form or in fact, to California, Oregon, Washington, or to the dwellers on the shore and islands of Alaska?

Does the example of England attract us? The august ceremonies which closed the sixtieth year of the reign of Queen Victoria, were clouded by the fact that those had

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been years of uninterrupted wars, — wars in which there had been hardships and dangers in unequal contests with inferior peoples ; wars made necessary by the policy of England to preserve unbroken and to strengthen, if possible, the chain of empire that England has carried around the globe. For England this may have been a wise policy. An attempt at its imitation by us cannot bring either success or honor. England conquers that she may inhabit and trade. A small island in a northern sea with a hardy and adventurous population must gain new lands as a refuge and home for its accumulating masses. Thus it seeks and secures protection for its home industries by first subduing and then clothing the millions of Asia and the half-clad tribes of Africa.

Thus and by such processes was the foundation laid for the great eulogium which Mr. Webster pronounced upon our ancestors in America and in England when he said of the Colonists, “ They raised their flag against a power to which, for purposes of foreign conquest and subjugation, Rome in the height of her glory is not to be compared ; a power that has dotted over the surface of the whole globe with its possessions and military posts whose morning drum beat, following the sun and keeping company with the hours, circles the earth with one continuous and unbroken strain of the martial airs of England.”

But the example of England is not for us. The field for conquest, for appropriation is about all occupied. Our theory is a theory of self government. Such has been our practice. Next we demand equality of citizenship in the States and equality of States in the Union. All this is inconsistent with the acquisition of distant and incongruous populations. And nowhere can there be found a more incongruous population than the present population of the Hawaiian Islands.

The future of the United States cannot be predicted, but

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of unoccupied territory we have a vast domain. Its vastness may be set forth in one statement: If the population of all the States and Territories of the Union could be transported to the State of Texas the number of inhabitants to the square mile would not exceed the number now resident in the States of Rhode Island and Massachusetts.

By the treaty of 1875 and the amendment of 1887, we have as full control of the trade of the Hawaiian Islands as we should have were those Islands made a part of the United States. Our manufactures, from iron bridges to friction matches, are entered without duty, and in return the sugar, rice, coffee and other products of the Islands are admitted free of duty at all our custom houses.

By the treaty of 1887 we acquired Pearl River Harbor, the most valuable harbor of the Islands.

The treaty of 1875 contains a stipulation that as long as the treaty shall remain in force the authorities of the Islands will not "dispose of or create any lien upon this port, harbor, or other territory, . . . or grant any special privilege or right of use therein, to any other power, state or government, nor make any treaty by which any other nation shall obtain the same privileges, relative to the admission of any articles free of duty."

These agreements and stipulations are all very well, says the advocate of annexation, but the treaty may be abrogated whenever we decline the treaty of annexation. What are the probabilities? In 1875 when the Islands were free to deal with England or with any other nation, when the United States had no foothold, we dictated the terms of the treaty.

Again in 1887, under the lead of Senator Edmunds, and when there was a heavy adverse public sentiment in the United States, and the treaty was in peril from our action, the Hawaiian authorities conceded the possession of Pearl River Harbor. For what reason have all these conces-

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sions been made? For fifty years the fortunes of the Islands have been in our hands, and the day of their freedom from our control is far away.

All the benefits that can come from annexation are now enjoyed by us, and they will continue to be enjoyed by us and by our successors through many generations, while we now are, and they hereafter are to be relieved of all responsibility for the government of the Islands. Moreover, the Islands can rest securely in mid ocean, freed from the anxieties and apprehensions of war, as Belgium and Switzerland are secure, though surrounded by rival and hostile States.

Whence this security for our supremacy in the Islands? It is to be found in two facts. First, in the situation of the Islands with reference to other countries. When we had acquired California and had connected it by railroads with the older States of the Union, the United States became the convenient, indeed the only valuable market for the products of the Islands. Distant as we are from the Islands, we are their only neighbors. Japan is 3400 miles from Honolulu. Hong Kong is 5000 miles away. The countries of Central and South America can only be reached by ocean voyages of three, four, five and six thousand miles.

My second reason is equally conclusive. Those distant countries are of no considerable value as markets for the products of the Islands.

In 1896 the total of exports was \$15,515,230, and of this the sum of \$55,132 found a market in other countries. In the same year the imports amounted to \$7,164,562. Of this sum the imports from the United States amounted to \$5,235,729. The exports of sugar to the United States in the year 1896 amounted to \$14,932,173.

What would be the consequences of the abrogation of

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the treaty? What the consequences of the annexation of the Islands by Japan or by England? The loss of the free American market and the imposition of a duty by the United States of forty per cent or more on the sugar product of the Islands would inevitably follow. What next? The depreciation of the sugar plantations at the rate of twenty-five per cent or more, and the ruin of the owners. And who are the owners? The owners of the plantations are the two thousand and seven hundred voters in a population of 109,000, and those whom they represent. The owners are the meagre minority now in authority and who constitute the government of Hawaii. They cannot consent to annexation by any other country. They cannot afford to abrogate the treaty. From 1882 to 1887, when propositions for the abrogation of the treaty were pending in our Congress, the business of the Islands was interrupted, property was depressed, the sugar planters were threatened with bankruptcy and the representatives of the Hawaiians appeared before the Committees on Foreign Affairs, pleading for the preservation of the treaty.

The pecuniary interests are much larger now than they then were, and by those interests any and every government that may be set up, by whatever name called and by whomsoever managed, will be controlled. The old monarchy had no affection for the United States, but its policy was subordinated to our policy, and such must be the condition of every successor, whether an oligarchy, a monarchy, or a republic.

From these general remarks I turn to the consideration of the circumstances under which we are invited to accept the annexation of the Hawaiian Islands. We are not so far removed in time from the events that occurred in Hawaii in the early months of the year 1893, that we may disregard the political character and moral quality

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of the proceedings, called a revolution, when we are invited to accept the territory that was then and thus wrested from its ancient proprietors.

There is nothing sacred in a monarchy, indeed there is nothing sacred in any government, whatever its form or name. The right of a government to exist comes from the will of the people freely expressed. This test is fatal to the claim of those who now rule in Hawaii.

There are forty thousand Hawaiians in the Islands and of those thirty-one thousand are of unmixed blood. It is claimed that under the old Régime there were ten thousand voters. They owed allegiance to the old government. There may have been others who were subjects. These as a body have never been consulted. Assume, what I do assume, that the Queen had no rights except such as may have been derived from the people, and that there was a continuing right in the people to supersede her in authority, and yet the fact remains that that power in the people has never been exercised.

Mr. Secretary Foster, in the treaty which he prepared in the last days of President Harrison's administration, admitted a right as then existing in the Queen and beyond her in the heir apparent to the throne.

By that *projet* of a treaty the Queen was to be paid the sum of \$20,000 annually during her life and the Princess was to receive in hand from the United States the sum of \$150,000, provided, however, that those two women, respectively, should, "in good faith, submit to the authority of the government of the United States and the local government of the Islands."

Thus did that *projet* recognize the personal rights of the Queen and also the right of succession in the dynasty of which she was then the head.

There may be those who favor annexation, who will excuse themselves in the thought that the government was

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only a monarchy, and that its overthrow, however accomplished, was a praiseworthy act.

Governments ought not to disregard their moral obligations.

This transaction is tainted with injustice. Injustice it may be to the deposed Queen, but assuredly it is tainted with injustice to the 40,000 Hawaiians who should be permitted to speak in regard to the government of their native land. And we who have maintained the doctrine of Home Rule, who have pleaded for Ireland, who have raised millions of men from slavery to citizenship, can we either defend this proceeding or accept the fruit thereof?

Finally, what disposition is to be made of the present population? Of the native Hawaiians there are about 40,000, of Japanese 24,000, of Chinese 21,000, of Portuguese 15,000, of Americans 3,000, of British, Germans and French combined there are 4,000, of other nationalities a thousand. Thus the Islands contain a population of 109,000. Are the Japanese and Chinese to be deported, the plantations to be abandoned and their owners to be consigned to ruin?

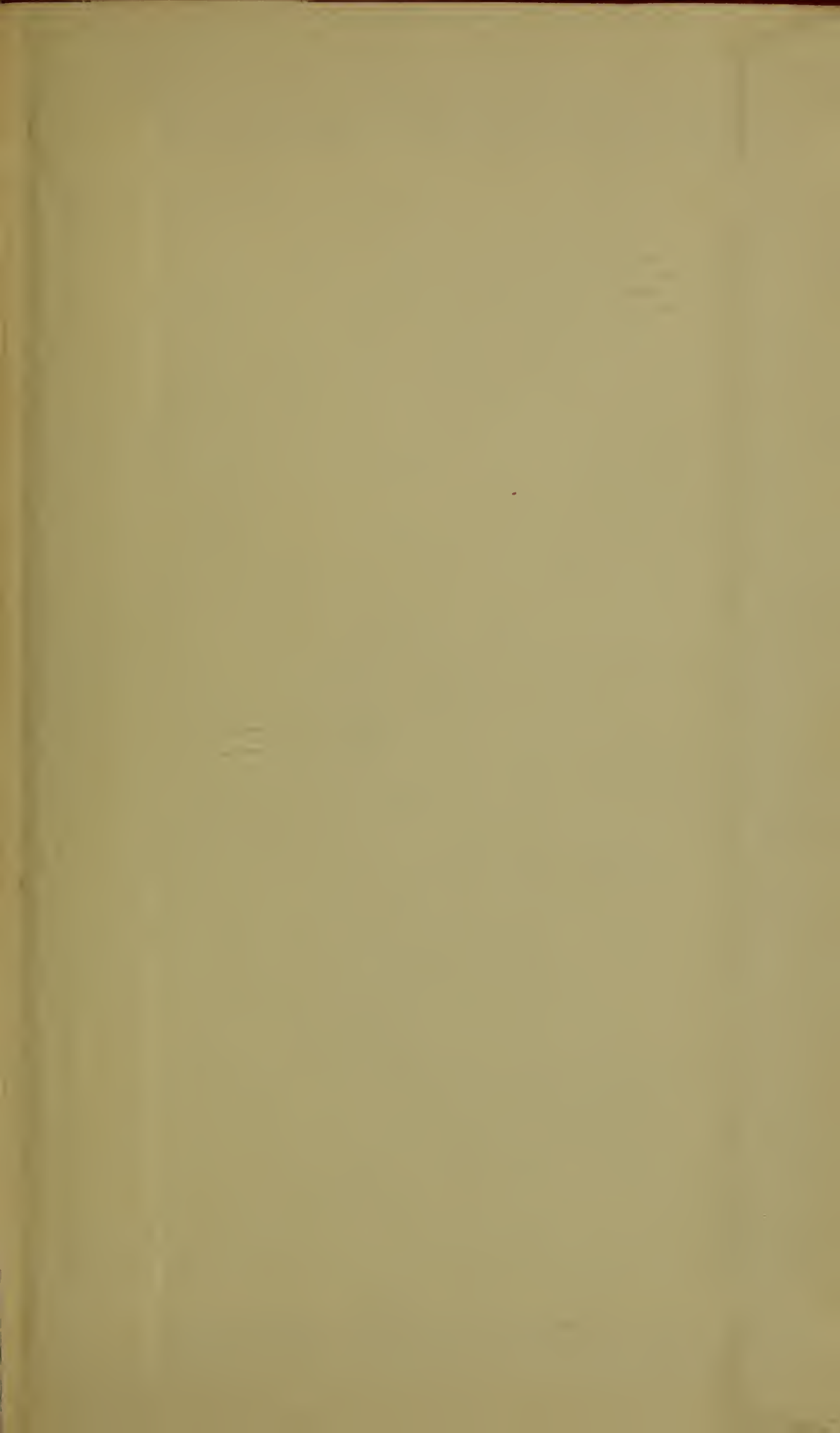
The pending treaty prohibits the further immigration of Chinese, and those who are now resident in the Islands are excluded from the mainland of the United States. By annexation the country will have in view the alternative of a vassal population within its jurisdiction, or the presence of a Mongolian State in the Union.

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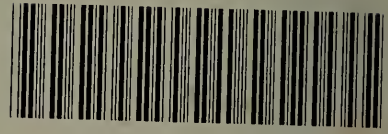
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